



Town of Paxton
Board of Selectmen
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Regular Meeting Minutes

Monday, January 9, 2023

Meeting Location: John Bauer Senior Center 17 West Street, Paxton, MA 01612

Members Present: Julia N. Pingitore, Chair
Kirk R. Huehls, Vice Chair
Carol L. Riches, Clerk

Town Administrator: Heather M. Munroe, Town Administrator

Attendees: see Attendee List

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:03pm. We will enter into Executive Session and will return to the regular meeting only for the purpose of adjourning.

CONSENT ITEMS

- 1 Approve the meeting minutes for the Select Board Meeting held on December 26, 2022.
- 2. Appoint Amanda DeRezendes as the Assistant Treasurer/Collector.
- **(JP)** Are there any objections to either of the consent items? Hearing no comment. Items 1&2 are approved.

UPDATE FROM TOWN COMMITTEES/BOARDS

Sheryl Lombardi – Building Department

- The building department is moving over to the Public Safety Building within the next month or so. Just wrapping up construction for a new office where dispatch used to be.
- Online permitting is going well. Trying to do some specialized building permits and new BOH permits (food and tobacco).
- Working on the MBTA Communities bylaw.

Roberta Brien – Zoning Board of Appeals

- We are currently down two members. We have not been very busy at this time. We have had a few variances for frontage and oversized structures. Looking forward to a rewrite of the Zoning Bylaws.
- Feedback from the EDC would be helpful. Not a heavy lifting committee but is very important.

Neil Bagdis -Planning Board

- Complimented the Town Administrator on the receipt of a grant for a total rewrite of the Zoning Bylaw. Last time we went through them was with CMRPC. Adopted a lot of what other towns had in place. Hire an outside consulting firm with this grant to work on the MBTA project. Post hearings on the electronic sign when it comes time. We need input from the community. Looking to complete this for the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2024.
- (JP) We can use surveys as well to help get input from the community.
- **Neil Bagdis** - The hearings will be in addition to our regular meetings.

Michael Voorhis – Con Com

- We do not currently have a conservation agent. We are in the midst of evaluating new applicants. We are meeting this Thursday to discuss the position.
- Baseball field with AMC will be our next big project.
- (JP) What does the agent do?
- **Mike Voorhis** – Clerical work of the commission, site visits, knowledge on how to proceed with project, wetland protection act and the agent will do preliminary submission of an application.
- (JP) What about regionalizing with other towns?
- **Mike Voorhis** – Rutland is interested but they do not have a budget set yet. Some interest in Leicester but there has not been a lot of communication there. The other members of the commission have all come forward to help at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Town Administrator Goals

- (HM) Working on the following goals: foster transparency, streamline operations, changes for annual town meeting, public street list, revise revolving fund, work on FY24 budget, Charter (townwide survey), Select Board material submitted 48 hours in advance of meeting. I also want to add on some additional items like grants and procurement.
- (CR) For me the biggest one is to have all the materials coming in a timely manor, so we have the opportunity to review them before we discuss it.
- (JP) I would like to see something for the DPW facility and the EDC.
- (KH) Consistency between Boards and Departments for hiring procedures.

NEW BUSINESS

Update on ARPA

- (JP) Update accounting sheet from Larissa. There are two items that are complete and I would like to vote to move the remaining funds back into the general ARPA account so it can be allocated to a new project.
- (HM) The Police Bridge Academy and water tower generator are complete.
- **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) to return the remaining funds from the Police Bridge Academy and the Water Tower Generator back into the ARPA general fund for use on a new project. Unanimous, all-in favor.**
- (JP) Many ARPA members no longer wish to be settled with the task of what is going on with the remaining ARPA funds. There is very little left so I would like to give those

individual back there time. I recommend that we dissolve the ARPA committee and have the Select Board administer what is left.

- **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) to dissolve the ARPA Committee and assign the remaining funds to the Select Board for project selection. Unanimous, all-in favor.**
- (HM) We will keep an eye on the contract for the fire truck.
- (JP) A lot of other communities have been told that it will be a long time before they get there vehicles and that the balance owed is more. I hope we do not run into this scenario.

Town Administrator quarterly update

- (HM) Revenues are doing well for so far for FY23.
- Investment income and expenses are all doing well. Central purchasing is actually going okay, employee benefits are doing well. Insurance premiums should have some money left over. Legal is doing well, so we would have the opportunity with the bylaw updates to have legal assistance. The retirement assessment is issuing an addition assessment to the towns, so we are keeping an eye out for that.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES

Finance Department

The Town Auditors will be on site for the next few weeks working with the Finance Departments on the FY22 Audit.

Public Safety Building

There has been a lot of action over at the PSB this past week. The Cable Access Committee has had a company installing new cameras and wires over in the Training Room. Our first trial run of the Select Board meeting being held in that room is on target for the end of January.

With the use of gift funds, the front lobby is getting a facelift with some fresh paint and more customer friendly access. Our goal is to still move our Land Use Coordinator to the old Dispatch area, now estimated to be around February 1st. There is now a customer window direct access for the police admin. Once the Land Use Coordinator moves, public will be able to enter the public safety building lobby without ringing a doorbell and receiving direct service.

Town Administrator

FY24 Budgets

I have been working with meeting with Departments on their FY24 budgets.

Procurement Certification

I have completed all three required courses that were held online over the course of a few months by the MCPPO to request MCPPO certification from the State.

FINANCES

ARPA

Two projects have now been completed with remaining funds that need to be returned to ARPA's available funds. The first is the Police Bridge Academy project is completed, with a total of \$4,628.60 to be returned to the ARPA available funds. The second is the Water Tower Generator project with a total remaining balance of \$5,624.44. This brings the total amount to be returned to ARPA at \$10,253.04.

Currently, there are still 10 projects that are outstanding, with two winding down. The electronic signs project should be completed within the next few months, if not sooner; and Tree Removal and Trimming should be complete once we receive the final bill. That leaves the following projects still underway: the West St Water Main Engineering; Food Pantry; Assistance to Households; West St Stormwater Management; Library Internet; MS4 Compliance; Fire Truck; Public Health Nurse.

FY23 Budget

This update will cover the FY23 year until December 31, 2022, our halfway point.

Revenues

To date, revenues are only updated through the end of November 30, 2022. The revenues typically do not get updated until mid-month after interest rates and bank statements are in. In the future, we will shoot for budget updates at the second meeting of the quarterly month to have these up-to-date. I will only cover items that are not reported as of November 30, 2022 between 45-50%.

- ✓ **Cemeteries (34%)** – These are lower than expected, but as much as we estimate, this will vary each year.
- ✓ **Fines & Forfeits (51.60%)**
- ✓ **Investment Income (92.86%)** – Interest rates are back up on general accounts.
- ✓ **Misc. Recurring (Teacher Retirement) – (0%)** – This comes from the State and had not been received by the Town to date.
- ✓ **MV Excise (38.60%)** – This is still on target as our major excise billing goes out in February and is due in March. This should be close to budget come our 3rd quarter report.
- ✓ **Other Misc. Not Estimated (Sale of equip) – (\$8k)** This was for the sale of fire truck earlier this year.
- ✓ **Payments in Lieu of Taxes (0%)** – We have a PILOT with Worcester and Leicester with land they own in Town. These assessments went out this past week and should be accounted for in the third quarter report.
- ✓ **Rentals (10.53%)** – This is for the 10 West Property which we rent. A few months of rent were forgiven as there was a purchase that was made for the building directly by the tenants.
- ✓ **WRSD Maintenance Account (61.68%)**

Expenses

We are holding our own with expenses in FY23. To date, there are not any major concerns with our budget and ability to stay on track for the remainder of FY23. A few things that we will be watching very closely are: the retirement board and votes that could impact our assessment midyear; and heating oil use and costs.

✓ Under Budget

- **Central Purchasing (33.97%)**– So far so good. However, it has only been a few months of oil use.
- **Con Com (6.5%)** – Con Com Agent position vacant for most of the year. Con Com had a new employee that resigned before the start of the fiscal year. Con Com met with Rutland’s Con Com to review possible sharing of position and ultimately determined they were looking for employees with different skill sets (agent vs admin). We have now posted the position and Con Com will be moving the process forward after their next meeting on the 12th.
- **Debt Borrowing costs** – We have not had to use this at all to date.
- **Employee Benefits** – With some folks coming off and going onto the health insurance plans, we are currently experiencing a bit of a savings.
- **Historical Commission (0%)**
- **Historical District Supplies (0%)**
- **Insurance Premiums (91.54%)** – We pay most of this at the beginning of the fiscal year and get adjustments with changes as the year progresses (add vehicle, subtract, etc).
- **Legal (22%)** – Well within budget and on target.
- **Plumbing Inspector** – We currently pay the plumbing inspector per inspection. This amount suggests the possibility that we may have to come to the reserve fund as the year proceeds if we have more inspections that are needed than we have funds to cover inspections. For FY24, we are looking to work with the Boards and Inspectors and make this into a revolving fund, so as we generate revenue and the need for inspection, we will always have the exact amount we need.
- **Public Building Maintenance (22%)** – We have not currently hired a custodian, waiting to see if we can combine a few buildings work at the same time before we do so.
- **Regional Dispatch (0%)** – This funding is for the fiber contract to maintain our connection between the Town and Holden, to the tune of \$8k a year. The contract is paid between Dec and Jan each year and we just received the bill.
- **Retirement Assessment** – We will need to keep a close eye on what happens with Worcester Retirement Board and if a new assessment is issued midyear.
- **Short Term Interest** – We have not had to use this at all to date.
- **Snow & Ice** – We are doing really well so far, due to luck, with

limited events.

- **Town Reports (0%)** – We expend this towards the end of the fiscal year.
- **Wachusett Greenways (44%)** – Reimbursements submitted as projects happen.

✓ **Over 50% Budget**

- **Animal Control Officer (55.96%)** – We paid the annual, prorated, cost for this service through Rutland a month or so ago. The only reason there are still funds, is because we switched from an employee to a service after the fiscal year began and required a reserve fund transfer into the account to cover the cost. Once May presents itself, we will be able to transfer the \$8k and some change out to another line.
- **Assessors - Payment to Vision for services**
- **Fin Com (59.27%)** – Dues
- **Municipal Info Services** – Purchase of all computers that we planned on purchasing.
- **Regional Planning Assessment (99.97%)** - Upfront
- **Town Clock Purchased Services (61.11%)** – As needed.
- **Tree Warden** – Purchases most of services at beginning of the year.

FY24 Budget

Active/Status Update:

Community Compact (IT) Grant – Grant funds were awarded in December in the amount of \$115,000 to support conversion to records management system, including scanning and electronically filing many of the Town’s files to relieve storage burden and make files more user friendly and searchable.

Community Compact Grant “HR Procedures” – Turnover in staff at Collin’s Center. Working with them to finish up the project. In Progress

DFS Firefighter Safety Grant – FD was awarded for \$15,500 for a grant for turnout gear which they applied for in October.

Early Education & Care – The Recreation Department has received a grant for \$3,250 a month towards the Before/After School Program starting in October. (9/2022)- In Progress

MIA Risk Management Grant – We were awarded half of the funding for the cost of chain saw safety kits (chaps, etc.), bucket truck communication gear, and cybersecurity simulation and testing costs for staff for a total of \$5626.53 out of the total \$9,237.50 applied for in September.

MIA Wellness Grant – Partially Complete.

Office of Grants & Research – The Police Department received a grant with funding from the National Highway & Traffic Safety Administration in the amount of \$19,921 (9.2022) – In Progress.

SAFE Grant – FD applied for and were awarded a grant in the amount of \$5,400 for safety education.

Shared Streets Grant- In Progress.

Small Bridge Grant (2019) – Planning Grant Black Hill Road, in progress.

State Earmark of Funds – Senator Gobi and Representative Ferguson had contacted my office early this summer to inquire if there were projects related to economic development in which we could use funding. They submitted legislation that would support \$75k for redoing our Zoning Bylaws and \$125k related to our DPW building. We received notice on Friday that the earmark totaling \$200k was approved.

United Way – The Recreation Department applied for and were awarded funds in the amount of \$5000 for additional after school/out of school programming.

Wachusett Reservoir Watershed Salt Reduction Grant – We were awarded the 50/50 matching grant for a polar flex system, that if awarded would reduce the cost of the item, which is originally \$6,700, in half.

Applied for:

Ambulance Certified Public Expenditure Program – FD applied for reimbursement for Medicaid/Mass Health ambulance billings for the prior Fiscal Year 2022, with the amount requested at \$62,566.

Assistance to Firefighters Grant- FD applied in January 2021 for \$450,000 for a Water Tanker. Funding to awarded through December, no word yet.

GAP II Grant – The DPW applied for the GAP III grant for funding for the Water Department's Pump stations for energy efficiencies, in the amount of \$50,000 in August. **Unfortunately, in January we received notice that we did not receive this grant.**

Procurement:

To do:

- ✓ **Cable Access Software**
- ✓ **Records Building – Fence**
- ✓ **Security Cameras (Paxton Center School) –**
- ✓ **Town Common area drainage (WRAP funding)**
- ✓ **Trash Collection**
- ✓ **Tivnan Field Lights (materials only)**

JOB OPENINGS

DPW

Temporary Employee – With an employee out on leave for the next 12 weeks, we have posted for a temporary employee to assist the DPW with regular tasks and snow responsibilities.

Town Hall

Assistant Treasurer Collector – We have offered this position to a candidate at the end of last week. We are waiting to see if the employee accepts.

Conservation Agent- This position has been vacant for a few months. The Con Com met last week to review the job description and posting and is for four hours a week. Once posted, this should be placed on the website and indeed. The Con Com is planning to meet on the 12th to determine how to proceed.

PROJECTS

Updates

Town Building Phone Upgrade – We are now working directly with TPX on this project.

SELECT BOARD CORRESPONDENCE

- **(JP)** The state accidentally sent COVID test that expire at the end of January so they will send out new ones. Someone had recently brought in a test that did not present a control line. The tests do need to be kept at room temperature for accuracy.
- **(JP)** Bay Path needs us to send an individual to the a meeting in order to vote for a representative for collective bargaining on January 18th at 10am. I will attend that. Heather will be the backup incase for Julia cannot attend.
- **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) for Board member Pingitore to attend the meeting as a representative for the Select Board and Heather Munroe will attend if Board member Pingitore is not available. Unanimous, all-in favor.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

- None
- **(JP)** The date for our next meeting should have been the 23rd of January but Carol is away. Let us plan for January 30th and if we do not need it then we can move forward.
- **(CR)** There was an EDC member that was concerned that their appointment only went to June of this year. I expressed that it was just to keep it in line with the other appointments and they would be reappointed with the everyone this June for another year.

ADJOURN

- **Motion (KH) seconded (CR) to leave the regular meeting and entered into Executive Session at 8:09pm and we will return to the regular meeting for the purpose of adjourning. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**
- **Returned to Regular Session at 8:24pm**
- **Adjourned Meeting at 8:24pm, Unanimous all-in favor. (KH) yes, (CR) yes, (JP) yes.**

The next meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2023, 7:00pm.

Documents from the Meeting filed in BOS office:

Agenda

Attendance list

Town Administrators update

Meeting minutes

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Graf-Parsons
Executive Assistant

